

# FATS, OILS & GREASE REGULATION UPDATES

## FACT SHEET

### Keeping Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG) out of the Sewer System

Food service establishments (FSEs) are required to control discharge of fats, oils and grease to the publicly owned sewer system. The LOTT Clean Water Alliance (LOTT) and its partner jurisdictions, the cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater, and Thurston County, manage and operate the sewer system. LOTT has made changes to its discharge regulations and updated rules for grease interceptor maintenance.



*Grease-laden wastewater, generated when preparing food and washing dishes, can constrict or even block sewer lines if the wastewater is discharged directly to the sewer system.*

FSEs generate grease-laden wastewater when preparing food and washing dishes. If this wastewater is discharged directly to the sewer, grease can constrict or even block sewer lines, causing the sewer to overflow. This can disrupt business operations and create a hazard to public health and the environment.

### FOG Program Requirements & Updates

LOTT is required by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to establish a program for managing fats, oils and grease. FOG programs help prevent grease-related sewer overflows by requiring commercial facilities that produce FOG to install and maintain grease interceptors. LOTT establishes rules for sewer discharge, which are included in partner jurisdiction sewer use ordinances. These rules ensure businesses maintain devices to remove grease and

prevent sewer overflows. Ecology reviews LOTT's program to ensure it meets federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements and protects the wastewater collection system and treatment plants.

LOTT updated the rules for grease interceptor maintenance because prior regulations were ineffective. Prior to initiating these changes, LOTT inspected FSEs to observe how grease interceptors were maintained, and to identify common deficiencies. LOTT also reviewed sewer use ordinances from other Washington municipalities to develop a program based on proven methods.

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## Changes to the Ordinance

The new rules would establish required frequencies for cleaning grease interceptors. They would also allow cleaning frequencies to be adjusted according to the rate of grease build-up in the FSE's interceptor. Changes include:

### Creating uniform standards that define how often a grease interceptor must be cleaned.

- FSEs must maintain their interceptor every 14, 30 or 90 days, depending on the size and type of interceptor.
- Hydromechanical grease interceptors (aka grease traps) must be cleaned every 14 days.
- Single-chamber high-capacity hydromechanical grease interceptors must be cleaned every 30 days.
- Multiple-chamber high-capacity hydromechanical grease interceptors, and large exterior grease interceptors (aka gravity grease interceptors) must be cleaned every 90 days.

### Defining cleaning standards.

- When an interceptor is pumped by a professional company, they must remove all contents including grease, water and food sediment.
- Businesses may self-clean small interceptors according to LOTT's self-cleaning methods.
- Cleaning frequencies can be increased or decreased based on how much grease and sediment fills the grease interceptor.

### Requiring businesses to maintain records and report maintenance activities.

- FSEs must maintain records and make them available to LOTT staff during inspections.
- FSEs must submit reports to LOTT when their grease interceptor is pumped.

### Prohibitions on the use of grease-dissolving additives, garbage grinders and dishwashers.

- The addition of grease-dissolving additives into an interceptor instead of maintenance is prohibited.
- Garbage grinders must be discharged to a gravity grease interceptor or be removed.
- Dishwashers may not be connected to a hydromechanical grease interceptor. They must discharge directly to the sewer, or to a gravity grease interceptor.

## Pumper Program

LOTT is establishing a Pumper Program to streamline reporting requirements and ensure that FSEs can find a grease pumper that will clean an interceptor according to LOTT's standard. Pumpers would agree to clean grease interceptors according to LOTT's standards and would be allowed to submit required maintenance reports on behalf of the FSE.

The FSE is responsible for maintaining grease interceptors and submitting reports to LOTT. However, a pumper can help simplify the process.

## Facility Inspections

FSEs that regularly maintain their grease interceptor and comply with reporting requirements may be inspected less often than non-compliant facilities. LOTT can prioritize facility inspections for FSEs that are not submitting reports, an indication they might not be cleaning their interceptor.

*Good business practices result in cleaner waterways. LOTT and partner jurisdictions work with local businesses to promote clean water in our communities.*

## For More Information

- **LOTT's Pretreatment Regulations** are located at [www.lottcleanwater.org/regulations](http://www.lottcleanwater.org/regulations).
- **For additional questions** about LOTT's Pretreatment Program, email [pretreatment@lottcleanwater.org](mailto:pretreatment@lottcleanwater.org) call (360) 528-5728.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What are Food Service Establishments (FSEs)?

FSEs include any type of nonresidential facility where food is prepared or served, including:

Restaurants	Grocery stores
Delis	Bakeries
School cafeterias	Assisted living centers
Hotels	Catering services
Food truck commissaries	Houses of worship

## What is the problem with grease in wastewater?

If greasy wastewater is discharged directly to the sewer, it can constrict or even block sewer lines, causing the sewer to overflow. This creates a hazard to public health and the environment and can subject LOTT to costly fines from the Department of Ecology.

## Will LOTT or the city pay for grease interceptor maintenance?

No, businesses are responsible for maintaining their grease interceptor, just as they must pay to install and maintain a dumpster for solid waste. The business that generates the grease pays the cost of grease management.

## Why can't I use enzymes?

Grease interceptors are not designed to work with enzymes. Their design is based on the fact that oil floats and solids sink in water. The addition of enzymes interferes with these operations and can discharge FOG to the public sewer.

## Why must garbage grinders be disconnected?

When garbage grinders discharge directly to the sewer, they introduce a large amount of FOG that can cause blockages. If they discharge to a small grease interceptor, the interceptor fills up with food solids and passes FOG into the public sewer.

## Why must dishwashers be re-routed?

When used properly, dishwashers are not a large source of FOG. Their primary function is to sanitize dishes and the source of sanitation; either high temperature or strong chemicals interfere with properly operating hydromechanical grease interceptors.

## I don't produce much grease; can I be exempt from cleaning?

No, while businesses cannot be exempt from cleaning requirements, they can apply for a variance. Variances allow a business to go longer than the time-based cleaning frequencies provided that the amount of grease and sediment does not exceed the interceptor's capacity.

## What harm can result from not maintaining a grease interceptor?

- Grease can pass into the publicly owned sewer and constrict the line, causing a sewer overflow.
- Clogs can cause wastewater to back up inside the FSE, resulting in closures, or a threat to public health if the FSE continues to serve food during a back-up.
- Blockages in FSE drain pipes must be cleared by a plumber, which results in added costs for the FSE.
- Corrosion to the interceptor can occur because of poor maintenance. This can result in extra costs for repairing or replacing the interceptor.
- Solidified grease in an interceptor requires extra time and specialized equipment to remove. This results in extra costs for the FSE.

## Why do hydromechanical grease interceptors (aka grease traps) need more frequent cleaning?

These grease interceptors are smaller and not designed to store large amounts of grease, so they must be cleaned frequently to work properly.

## What's the difference between gravity grease interceptors, hydromechanical grease interceptors and high-capacity hydromechanical grease interceptors?

- Size and capacity. A gravity grease interceptor is typically over 1000 gallons and installed outside. Because of their size, they can go longer between pump-outs.
- A hydromechanical grease interceptor is smaller (20 to 50 gallons), installed inside and must be cleaned often because they fill with grease quickly.
- A high-capacity hydromechanical grease interceptor is small but is designed to hold more grease and can go longer between pump-outs.